



# FORT YORK RESIDENCE

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND SHELTER FOR HOMELESS  
MEN WHO ARE WORKING TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT

 **TORONTO** Shelter, Support & Housing Administration

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## ■ Introduction

The Fort York Residence shelter and housing model is the first of its kind in Toronto. Through both its innovative building design and progressive employment services, Fort York Residence has created a program that through a continuum of service approach, helps addresses some of the fundamental needs of the homeless to permanently end their homelessness: shelter, employment and affordable housing.

The provision of affordable housing for the homeless is about more than providing accommodation at below market rents. For many individuals caught in a cycle of homelessness, the key to moving forward is reconnecting socially with their community and securing long-term housing stability through suitable employment.

Recognizing that many clients accessing the emergency shelter system are motivated to achieve some level of employability, Fort York Residence was developed as a transition to work and housing facility. Within a single facility, clients can move from shelter to transitional housing at affordable rents and are supported along a process to obtain (or maintain) employment and achieve the means to live independently in the community. To this end, Fort York Residence is helping address the housing affordability challenge for the homeless and at-risk population in Toronto.



## ■ Design

Fort York Residence was designed by Joe Lobko Architects. Mr. Lobko believes in the importance of creating an open and warm environment to help instil pride and dignity in clients. Accordingly, clients were included in the planning and design of Fort York Residence. This approach led to the facilities bright, welcoming 3-storey design, including a long porch and large windows that provide views of Lake Ontario to the south and Toronto's downtown to the east.

The 74 shelter beds are of a dormitory style with low level walls dividing the spaces into groups of two to eight. With this design, clients achieve an enhanced sense of privacy and personal space. Each bed is also linked to a locker for the storage of personal belongings, which contributes to the sense that Fort York Residence is a place where clients can build a foundation for leaving their homelessness behind.

## ■ Design (continued)

As clients initiate and make progress in an individualized program at Fort York Residence, they may have the opportunity to move from the dormitory shelter component of the building to one of the 24 self contained bachelor units housed on the third floor. Supported by staff and the social and community connections they have developed, a client's move to the upper floor is both symbolic and a concrete result of success in achieving their employment goals and moving closer to independent living.



The total cost to build Fort York Residence was \$4,750,000. Of this \$3,022,375 was provided by the Government of Canada through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative. The remaining \$1,727,635 was provided by the City of Toronto, in addition to the donation of the land.

### Property Description

Total Size of Property:	3916.1 square metres
Size of portion occupied by Fort York Residence:	843.46 square metres
Size of portion occupied by Child Care building:	07.0 square metres

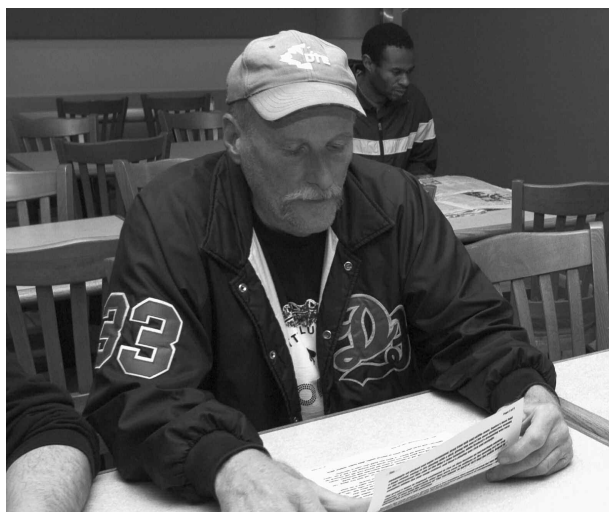
### Building Dimensions

Number of floors:	3
Total size of Fort York Residence:	2400.8 square metres
Size of Fort York Residence ground floor:	822.5 square metres
Size of Fort York Residence second floor:	971.3 square metres
Size of Fort York Residence third floor:	787.0 square metres

### Building Facilities

Number of dormitory style shelter spaces:	74
Size of space per shelter bed:	81.83 square metres
Number of transitional housing units:	24
Size of each transitional housing unit:	76.2 square metres

- The transitional housing units on the third floor are supported by a shared laundry facility and two lounges.
- The dormitory style shelter units are supported by a shared laundry facility, lounges, kitchen, dining hall, workshop and resource rooms, & staff office space.



## ■ Housing Model

### | Dormitory Shelter |

Unlike most shelters in the City of Toronto, Fort York Residence is not an emergency shelter, and therefore access is limited to those who have been identified as good candidates to eventually obtain and maintain long-term affordable housing and employment (if not already working). Potential residents for Fort York Residence are identified through Seaton House Men's Hostel (a City of Toronto shelter) or are referred by community agencies. Prior to admission, unemployed individuals are required to have completed 40 hours of volunteer work. Clients employed full-time are admitted and must complete 30 hours of volunteer work over a three-month period while living at Fort York. Additionally, clients that are employed must save 60% of their income, which is intended to be used for a future payment of first and last months rent for housing in the community. While there is no financial cost for clients to stay in the dormitory shelter, they are required to either accumulate a financial asset base for future investment in their housing situation, or work experience and social capital through volunteering.

### | Transitional Housing |

The 24 transitional housing units at Fort York Residence are each equipped with their own kitchen, bathroom and living area. These units are rent-geared-to-income with clients paying 30% of their income as rent. Additionally, they must save 30% of their income for a future payment of first and last months rent. The goal for those living in these units is to be able to move to permanent housing within a 9 month period. When a client moves out of Fort York Residence, they continue to receive follow-up support for up to 6 months.



### | Programming and Support |

At Fort York Residence, clients focus on finding and maintaining employment, educational advancement, community participation through volunteer work, and preparing for savings and long-term financial planning. This model is based on the recognition that shelter and affordable housing are required to find employment, and that income generation is one of the most effective routes out of homelessness.

To achieve this, clients are engaged in the development of a personal case plan that prioritizes their goals and objectives and links them with community supports and services to meet their immediate and long-term needs. The case plan is supported by a three-stage transition process that has as its goal, finding stable employment and permanent housing.



### Stage One – Preparing for Employment

After finalizing a case plan, clients are offered workshops that focus on obtaining employment. Workshops include: lifeskills, computer literacy, resume writing, effective interview techniques, and employment search.

### Stage Two – Employment and Empowerment

Once a client has found stable employment, he meets with a counsellor to review his case plan to ensure that their objectives are being met. Residents are required to save part of their income for future rent deposits or to purchase furniture and appliances when they are ready to leave Fort York Residence.

Programming at this stage focuses on preparing for independent living, which includes: managing personal finances, maintaining employment, housing search and tenants' rights, and planning and moving to permanent housing. To support clients at this stage, housing workers are available to assist with all issues related to finding and keeping housing.



### Stage Three – Housing and Follow-up

The housing and follow-up program is designed to assist clients to find and keep permanent housing. As part of the transition process, clients may stay in one of Fort York Residence's bachelor units, but must be working full time.

Whether living in a transitional housing unit or in permanent housing, a housing worker continues case management and maintains a connection with each client for up to six months after moving from Fort York Residence. This continuity of support helps clients with their case plan and assists them to become part of the community.

### ■ Program Innovations

Fort York Residence clients also benefit from ongoing programming innovation. One example is the Transition to Work Pilot Project, an initiative of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (funded by the Government of Canada) and the City of Toronto. Another programming innovation is LearnSave, a financial incentive pilot project developed by Social and Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI).



### | Transition to Work Pilot Project |

As a transition to work/housing facility, Fort York Residence provides in-house transition to work supports. The Transition to Work Pilot Project (TTWPP) is building on these supports to meet the needs of residents by: enhancing capacity to move residents toward appropriate work options; identifying resources to meet the work-related needs of clients; developing programs and policies related to employability for homeless or at-risk individuals; and identifying and/or facilitating linkages with community and government agencies required to support employment seeking homeless clients. In addition, the TTWPP includes a new partnership with George Brown College which will provide links to apprenticeship programs for clients of Fort York Residence.



### | LearnSave |

As part of the life skills programming at Fort York Residence, many residents are participating in an asset-building pilot program called the Independent Living Account (ILA) Project. The project seeks to test the applicability of matched savings incentives and financial literacy training to assist people living in transitional housing to build financial assets in order to access to the private rental market. These supports are used to create self-sufficiency and allow clients to save for first and last month's rent and/or utility hook-ups, moving expenses and apartment insurance.

This project is an important resource to the participants at Fort York Residence because it helps clients reach their goals through the accumulation of financial assets and financial education. Fort York Residence's commitment to continuous program innovation and collaboration affords clients the dignity and supports necessary to gain employment and work towards regaining housing in the community.



## ■ Conclusion

Fort York Residence helps clients to develop self-efficiency and independence to overcome the potential spiral of dependency and ongoing shelter use. This supportive environment works to improve each client's long term accessibility to an income that can support a transition back to the community.

Since accepting its first clients in January 2004, 276 homeless men have entered the program at Fort York Residence. On average, 68% of residents who moved out were employed when they left, and approximately 60% moved into permanent housing.

Achieving sustainable and affordable housing conditions for the homeless depends on the provision of successful social programs combined with facilities that allow individuals to continue their lives with a sense of pride and dignity. Fort York Residence provides an essential step along a transitory process that begins with a situation of homelessness and leads toward a stable position where long-term affordable housing can be sought. The continuous reintegration of homeless individuals into the economy, community and housing, is a reality at Fort York Residence.



## Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

If you would like further information about the City of Toronto's housing and homeless services and supports, please visit our website at [www.toronto.ca/housing](http://www.toronto.ca/housing) or contact:

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